



U.S. Immigration
and Customs
Enforcement

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News Release

ALIEN SMUGGLER SENTENCED TO LENGTHY PRISON TERM IN HOSTAGE TAKING CASE

Female hostage testifies to ordeal

HOUSTON, Texas — In response to the lengthy prison sentence issued by a federal jury in the Southern District of Texas on August 11, 2006, U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) issued this statement:

“By working with our partners at the Harris County Sheriff’s Department, ICE agents were able to remove these five dangerous violators out of our community. Friday’s 30-year sentence illustrates the seriousness of the crime.” Said Bob Rutt, ICE’s special agent in charge. “The investigation highlights the fact that alien smuggling is not a victimless crime and is a serious criminal violation that impacts our community. I wish to thank Sheriff Thomas and his deputies for working with ice on these alien smuggling investigations.”

#ICE#

U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement was established in March 2003 as the largest investigative arm of the Department of Homeland Security. ICE is comprised of four integrated divisions that form a 21st century law enforcement agency with broad responsibilities for a number of key homeland security priorities.



**Department of Justice
U.S. Attorney's Office
Southern District of Texas**

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**ALIEN SMUGGLER SENTENCED TO LENGTHY PRISON TERM IN
HOSTAGE TAKING CASE**

Female Hostage Testifies to Ordeal

(HOUSTON, TX) Cupertino Delgado-Miranda, "Cooper", 33, of Mexico, the fifth person charged with "hostage taking" as a result of an alien smuggling investigation begun in July 2005 when a female hostage escaped her captors, has been sentenced to 30 years in federal prison, United States Attorney Don DeGabrielle announced today.

Cupertino Delgado-Miranda, "Cooper", 33, of Mexico, plead guilty to "hostage taking" before United States District Judge Melinda Harmon on March 29, 2006, admitting to smuggling a group of undocumented aliens into the United States and holding them hostage at the William Tell residence to compel the payment of smuggling fees on July 30, 2005, but he denied the more aggravating aspects of the case including his role as a leader of the smuggling operation and the sexual assault of the female hostage who escaped from her captors and contacted police.

At today's hearing, the female hostage testified about the events that lead to her escape from the William Tell residence in July 2005, and described in detail her two week ordeal as a slave of the smugglers and the victim of repeated physical and sexual assaults by "Cooper".

At the conclusion of the hearing, Judge Harmon determined that Cupertino "Cooper" Delgado-Miranda was as a leader/organizer of the smuggling group who used a firearm to intimidate his hostages, subjected the undocumented aliens to more seven days of confinement, and had sexually assaulted the female hostage. These findings are aggravating factors which have the effect of increasing the applicable guideline range considered by the court in imposing sentence. In this case, the aggravating factors added an additional 20 years to Delgado-Maldonado's minimum of 10 years for the hostage taking conviction.

The investigation ultimately leading to the identification and arrest of "Cooper" was initiated on July 30, 2005, after a female hostage escaped from a residence located on the 2100 block of William Tell in Houston, Texas, and alerted law enforcement authorities. The investigation into this event conducted by officers of the Harris County Sheriff's Office (HCSO) and agents of the Houston office of the Immigration and Customs Enforcement lead to the arrest of four men at the residence, who have since been convicted of holding undocumented aliens prisoner, while demanding family members pay for their release. The female foreign national,

who had escaped provided investigating agents a description and partial name -- "Cooper" -- of one of the "coyotes" who had held her and others hostage at the William Tell residence, but fled before the officers arrived. A joint effort to find "Cooper" the alleged leader of the smuggling group was then initiated by HCSO and ICE.

On August 24, 2005, HCSO received another call about a possible hostage situation involving alien smugglers at a residence located on the 6400 block of Overlook. At this residence, deputies discovered a total of nine undocumented aliens, including three juveniles. ICE agents, called in to continue the investigation, recognized the name of one of the aliens in custody as the fifth person sought in the William Tell residence investigation. Cupertino Delgado-Miranda, also known as "Cooper", was taken into administrative custody by ICE agents, and transferred to the custody of the United States Marshal's Service after the initiation of a federal criminal prosecution on September 1, 2006. He has been in federal custody since his arrest and will remain in custody until the completion of his sentence.

The four other defendants charged for their roles in the July 30, 2006 smuggling operation have also been convicted of "hostage taking" following their admission of guilt and are pending sentencing in September 2006. Those four defendants are: Vicente Parades Ariza, 28, of Mexico; Carlos Gomes Sanchez, 27, of Honduras; Santos Netro Azua, 37, of Mexico; and Fernando Olivares Reyes, 27, of Mexico.

This case is being prosecuted by Assistant United States Attorneys Jim McAlister, Glenn Cook and Department of Justice Trial Attorney Lou DeBaca.

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